

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /074 W

----- 013235

R 090544Z AUG 75

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3491

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0675

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS ET

SUBJECT: RECENT DISRUPTION OF ROAD COMMUNICATION IN ERITREA

REF: A. ASMARA 0673 B. ASMARA 0669

1. CONGEN HAS RECEIVED INFORMATION ON THREE RECENT INCIDENTS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO CONTINUED DISRUPTION OF ROAD COMMUNICATION IN ERITREA. THESE INCIDENTS ARE IN ADDITION TO REPORTS OF BRIDGES DESTROYED OR DAMAGED ON ASMARA-DEKEMARE ROAD AND DEKEMARE-ADI KEYIH ROAD.

2. REPORTED ENCIRCLEMENT OF 300 COMMANDO POLICE ON ASMARA-KEREN ROAD (NOTED REF A) HAS ONCE AGAIN CREATED PROBLEM ALONG ROUTE WHICH HAS BEEN SCENE OF FREQUENT HARASSMENT AND INTERDICTION.

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SERIOUSNESS OF SITUATION IS EVIDENCED BY CONCERTED EFFORT

BEING LAUNCHED BY EPMG FORCES TO CLEAR ROAD AND EXTRICATE
COMMANDO POLICE.

3. SECOND INCIDENT OCCURRED SOUTH OF ADI KEYIH, WHEN EPMG
FORCE WAS AMBUSHED. AFTER BROSK FIREFIGHT, GOVERNMENT FORCES
WITHDREW, AND REPORTEDLY VENTED ANGER AND BATTERED PRIDE ON
RESIDENTS OF ADI KEYIH, ALLEGEDLY KILLING 70 AND WOUNDING
MANY MORE. THIS INCIDENT HAS INCREASED TENSIONS IN THE
AREA AND MADE TRAVEL ON ADI KEYIH ROAD EXTREMELY HAZARDOUS
FOR ALL BUT VERY HEAVILY ARMED CONVOYS.

4. THIRD INCIDENT CONCERNED 110 TRUCK CONVOY CARRYING SORGHUM
AND MILLET FROM ASMARA DESTINED FOR ADIGRAT AND MEKELE IN TIGRE
PROVINCE. GRAIN WAS PRODUCED IN HUMERA AND TRANSPORTED TO
ASMARA SOME TIME AGO TO BE DISTRIBUTED IN ERITREA FOR DROUGHT
RELIEF. EPMG AUTHORITIES LATER DECIDED TO SHIP GRAIN TO
TIGRE FOR DROUGHT RELIEF WHICH PROMPTED FRONT (ELF/PLF) TO
WARN EPMG THAT THEY WOULD NOT PERMIT GRAIN TO LEAVE ERITREA.
SCORES OF LOADED TRUCKS (AS MANY AS 100) WERE PARKED IN
ASMARA FOR OVER ONE MONTH BEFORE DEPARTING MORNING OF AUGUST 5
WITH 500-MAN EPMG ESCORT. FRONT HAD LIFTED OBJECTIONS TO
SHIPMENT IN EXPECTATION THAT IF SORGHUM WENT SOUTH TO TIGRE,
WHEAT (WHICH IS NO LONGER AVAILABLE IN ASMARA) WOULD BE
ALLOWED TO COME NORTH FROM TIGRE. CONVOY WAS PERMITTED TO
PROCEED TO DEKEMARE AND ADI UGRI WITHOUT INCIDENT. IT IS
REPORTED THAT THIS SUCCESS EMBOLDENED EPMG TROOPS TO HARASS
LOCAL RESIDENTS OF VILLAGES ALONG ROUTE, INCLUDING LOOTING
AND BEATINGS. FRONT UNITS IN AREA RESPONDED BY ATTACKING CONVOY
13 KM SOUTH OF ADI UGRI AND FORCING ITS RETURN TO ADI UGRI,
WHERE IT REMAINS AS OF THIS REPORT.

5. COMMENT: WHILE THESE THREE INCIDENTS ARE REPRESENTATIVE
OF DISRUPTIONS OF ROAD COMMUNICATIONS THROUGHOUT ERITREA, IT
SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD THAT CURRENT ISOLATION OF ASMARA FROM ROAD
TRAFFIC (NOTED REF B) WAS INITIATED BY EPMG TO DEMONSTRATE
AND MAINTAIN CONTROL OVER LOCAL SITUATION.
SHERRY

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